SOWING GOOD SEEDS: THE VOCATION & MINISTRY of the CATECHIST

4 Sessions for Training Parish Catechists
CONTENTS:

Module 1:
The Vocation of the Catechist - Called to Share Faith

Module 2: Catechesis and the RCIA

Module 3: Catechesis, Method and Content

Module 4: Catechesis, Prayer and Liturgy
Module 1:
The Vocation of the Catechist
- Called to Share Faith
REFLECTION:

Listen! A sower went out to sow..................

The gospel of Mark speaks of a farmer who owns a field in which he or she plants, tends, waters, and eventually reaps a harvest.

This gospel story from Mark is the basis for thinking about evangelization, our first topic here.

Jesus is the first sower. It is Christ who has sown the seed of faith in our hearts and that seed is the word of God. Today Christ continues to plant that seed through the Church and the Holy Spirit.

And just as in the first century when this story was first told, some seed falls by the wayside, some on stony soil, some among the weeds and thorns. But some falls on good soil, that is, among men and women who are open in their lives to a personal relationship with Christ and to solidarity with their neighbour. (GDC 14-15)

CONVERSATION STARTER:
- How have you experienced seeds of faith being sown in your heart?
- In what way/s are you open to developing your relationship with Christ?
What is Catechesis?

‘Catechesis’ and ‘catechumenate’ share the same roots; both come from the Greek *katechein*. *Kata* means ‘down’..........*echein* means ‘to sound’, translated into English it is literally ‘sounding down’, ‘a re-sounding’, a ‘re-echoing down to another.’ (EGW, Page 29) In catechesis we echo 2,000 years of lived experience, experience of the presence of Christ among us in the Church.

- The goal of catechesis is to put people in touch, in communion, indeed, in intimacy with Jesus Christ.
  GDC 80

- This first conversion is strengthened and matured through catechesis, whereby we come to know Christ, to desire the reign of God, to understand the requirements of a living relationship with Christ, and to discern our path to holiness.
  GDC 80

- The object of catechesis is to lead people to profess their faith in Christ.
  GDC 82

- In the Church ‘I believe’ becomes ‘we believe’ as all the faithful step forward together.
  GDC 83

- How does the above help you to understand what catechesis is?
- What’s new for you?
- In light of the above imagine you have been asked to tell the parish what catechesis is, write 200 words for the parish newsletter.
Listen to the following passage:

Catechesis is nurture; it is the process of maturing faith. It belongs to the household of faith: it takes place among believers when they share their faith with the object of deepening and enriching it from another’s experience. It is the mutual search for meaning within the Christian tradition. We acknowledge our relationship to God through and in Jesus Christ; when we are involved in catechesis we speak out of this relationship……..

Catechesis has the following main features:

- Catechesis takes place within the community. Christian faith should always have a community dimension and it should lead to a deepening of community. I am not saying that in catechesis one is looking to the community for all the answers to life’s mysteries: the community itself is a learning community.
- Catechesis helps us to develop our gospel vision of life: this means deepening our understanding of how our faith works itself out in the practical details of everyday living.
- Catechesis is a sharing of beliefs, values and ideas. It is a mutual learning process. This sharing will, as the occasion demands, include a systematic programme to cover every aspect of the Christian’s relationship to God, the Church and humankind so that everybody may have a thorough grounding for their faith life.
- Catechesis involves prayer: not only instruction on individual prayer but also on the communal prayer-life of the church, for example, the Eucharist.
- Catechesis is a life-long process. There is never a point at which catechesis is completed, because there is no point in human life at which the individual can encompass God.

From Our Faith Story: Its telling and its sharing, Patrick Purnell SJ Pages 70-71

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Think about your own parish community and parish life....
Who or what has it helped you to develop a gospel vision of life?
Where did you learn to pray?
Catechesis: Ongoing, Formative and Outreaching

The GDC 67 speaks about catechesis as an 'essential moment in the process of evangelization.' What might this mean?

- Evangelisation is about hearing the Good News about Jesus Christ
- Evangelisation is about having the opportunity to listen to the Good News
- It’s about Christian witness
- Presentation of the Good News to those who have not heard it
- Initiation into the Church through Catechesis
- The ongoing formation of Christian believers and communities
- The renewal of the Church
- All actions which further the building of God's Kingdom of love, justice and peace

You can see that this involves much more than 'instruction' about the faith. It involves an initial apprenticeship into the entire Christian way of life which continues throughout the person's lifetime. It means that all of us are on a continuous journey of faith and that we deepen our relationship with Christ in the Church, it implies that we are open to growing and developing and that the Christian community provides us with opportunities throughout our journey of faith to grow. Here are some of the opportunities that are available:

**LECTIO DIVINA:**

The exploration of sacred scripture which arouses a response of faith

**LITURGICAL CATECHESIS:**

Explains ritual, prayer, gestures, and signs.
Educates for active participation, contemplation & silence

**LINKING with LIFE:**

Reading the signs of the times
Interpreting circumstances in light of the Gospel

**THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION:**

Giving reasons for the hope that is in us
Deepening our understanding of the content of our Creed
What's a Catechist?
We can find this out by exploring what the GDC tells us about the Ministry of the Word:

There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the Kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God are not proclaimed. EN 22

Those who are already disciples of Jesus Christ also require to be constantly nourished by the word of God.

Catechists enable this nourishing to take place by being attentive to God’s word, by being authentic witnesses to the Gospel and by attracting others in the way they live.

The ministry of catechesis involves the following elements:

- Calling to communion and faith. This involves proclaiming the Gospel, reaching out to those on the margins of Christian life as well as the initial awakening of Christian families.
- Initiating into the life of faith, the liturgical life and the life of charity lived by the People of God.
- Ongoing permanent catechesis to nourish and deepen faith
- Preparing for participation in the sacraments and above all the Eucharist
- Developing understanding of faith through theological study and reflection

Two types of Catechesis

**FIRST PROCLAMATION of the GOSPEL**
- Call to faith
- A foundation to conversion
- Initiation into the Christian Way of life

**ONGOING CATECHESIS**
- Sustains faith
- Deepens conversion
- Persevering in the Christian Way of life
THE VOCATION & MINISTRY of CATECHIST

The Second Vatican Council enabled each one of us to recognize that we participate in the 'priestly, prophetic and kingly ministry of Christ.'

This means that all the baptized are called to a life of:

- Prayer and worship
- Truth telling and making a difference in our world
- Service

This priestly, prophetic and kingly way of life is confirmed and strengthened in us by the sacrament of Confirmation.

It is in answer to this call to service that some of us feel drawn to enable others to be nourished by the word of God, so the vocation and ministry of the catechist arises from our baptism.

Consider your call:

- How do you consider your role as a catechist to be a ministry?
- When did you first feel called to this ministry in the Church?

Because they share the same lifestyle as those they catechize, lay catechists are effective in helping people see how the Gospel is lived out in everyday life.

GDC 230

From a loving knowledge of Christ, lay people desire to proclaim him and lead others to know him. To be called to this ministry affirmed by the Church for it, and dedicated to it, is a high calling!

GDC 231
Skills for catechesis

The key resource is any catechesis is the catechist themselves. Catechesis is fruitful when the catechist is committed to their ongoing faith journey and has formed good habits of the heart such as reflection and prayer.

The key skills which catechists need to develop are:

- **Group Skills** - a skilled catechist is aware of how groups relate and has a range of techniques which they can apply to enable the group to share well
- **Prayer Skills** - a skilled catechist has experience of a variety of ways of praying
- **Source Skills** - a skilled catechist knows where to find sources, especially sources from Scripture and Tradition and how to make these accessible to the group
- **Listening Skills** - a skilled catechist is attentive to people and can hear not only what is said but also what is not being openly shared in the group
- **Organising Skills** - a skilled catechist does forward planning and preparation, ensuring that resources are available to everyone
These skills are highlighted in the GDC 235. As a catechist you should be prepared to:

- Share your faith in Jesus
- Lead others to entrust themselves to Jesus
- Learn how to communicate the Gospel message effectively
- Make known the story of Christ as a story of salvation
- Lead others to desire union with Christ in the celebration of the sacraments
- Enable others to deepen their journey

The skill base of the catechist is summed up well in this passage:

One’s being, both human and Christian, is formed when one matures as a person, as a believer and as an apostle. The catechist in this process is committed both to the message of Christ and to the human family. Knowing well that message, and knowing well what it means to be human with all its joys, hopes, dreams, and challenges – this is the field of the catechist. Expertise in this field makes the catechist great.

Formation must move in this direction. By engaging in catechetical work, the catechist also grows in maturity, becoming able to relate, promote dialogue, work in groups, and witness to faith.

The catechetical activity in which one engages springs from the centre of one’s life, deepening spirituality for all. Catechists catechize others by first catechizing themselves!

GDC 239

What skills would you like to develop in order to mature as a catechist?

In what way/s are you committed to your own spiritual development?
Your Faith Journey

Throughout this first module we have been speaking about the ongoing journey of faith. Just as human beings go through developmental stages in physical and psychological growth, we also grow and develop in our faith stance towards life. James Fowler has mapped out some stages of development which can enable us to identify where we are on our own particular journey and perhaps to notice where we can continue to grow!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAGE of Faith Development</th>
<th>Self</th>
<th>God</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intuitive-Projective Faith</strong></td>
<td>Imagination is stimulated by stories,</td>
<td>The child’s experience of parents will be projected onto a sense of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>gestures and symbols</td>
<td>God; here images of God are formed unconsciously so that e.g., if</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>parents are kind then God is kind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mythic-Literal Faith</strong></td>
<td>We can now sort out the real from make-believe, the actual from fantasy. We become capable of capturing meaning from stories and can enter into the perspective of others.</td>
<td>We no longer believe in Santa Claus. Stories of suffering make us sad. The people in the Gospels are real. We relate to Jesus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Synthetic-conventional Faith</strong></td>
<td>A person knows why he/she believes.</td>
<td>One pulls together various parts of faith and tends to conform to the majority, following rules laid down by the proper authority (the church or Bible).</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Views at this stage are often stereotyped.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Individuative-reflective Faith</strong></td>
<td>There is a relocation of authority within the self, along with a critical reflection of one's beliefs.</td>
<td>Faith becomes uniquely one's own. In addition, there is usually a struggle to grow and understand.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Conjunctive Faith</strong></td>
<td>Individuals realize the paradoxes in faith, and learn to live with their faith and their questions.</td>
<td>This stage involves a dynamic, trusting relationship with God.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Universalizing Faith</strong></td>
<td>People here invest their lives in a larger cause without being concerned by the personal cost</td>
<td>This stage is defined by feeling at one with God.</td>
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12
Take time to reflect on:

- How your ideas about God and your images of God have grown and developed
- In what way/s have you struggled to come to a deep and trusting relationship with God?
- Who do you know in your life who has obviously invested their lives in a larger cause and has no self-interest?
- If you were to take time to map out the various stages on your journey of faith who would be the significant people who helped you?
- Who taught you to trust in God?
**Key Sources**

As you work with a variety of groups in different settings you will need to return again and again to the following tools which are described in the GDC 240:

1. **The Three great Era’s of God’s action in human history**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Old Testament Period</th>
<th>The Life of Christ</th>
<th>The History of the Church</th>
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</table>

2. **The Key Elements of the Christian Message**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>The Creed</th>
<th>The Liturgy</th>
<th>Prayer</th>
<th>The Moral Life</th>
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Sacred Scripture provides the foundation for all catechesis, and the Catechism provides a reference point. Gradually with experience you will become adept at making wise use of these sources.

**Planning Sessions**

When planning a session you should try to develop it so that the following elements are connecting to each other:
JOURNALLING:

Take time to review what you have learned in this module about the ministry and vocation of the catechist.

- What has affirmed you?

- What has challenged you?

- What skills do you feel you need to develop now?

- How will you integrate your learning with what is already going on in your parish?
Essential Resources:

GDC - The General Directory for Catechesis in Plain English, Twenty-Third Publications, Mystic 2004


EN - Evangelii Nuntiandi: Evangelisation in the Modern World, Pope Paul VI

A Gift Destined to Grow: An Invitation to study the General Directory for Catechesis, Prepared by the Bishop’s Committee for Catechesis and Adult Christian Education

The Sunday Missal


What Every Catechist Should Know, Joseph D. White, Our Sunday Visitor 2003


Websites:
www.wednesdayword.org

www.sacredspace.ie/livingspace

www.intratext.com/X/ENG0159.HTM

www.fdlc.org/Liturgy.htm
Module 2: Catechesis and the RCIA
REFLECTION:

*Listen to the reading twice, with silence for reflection after each reading.*

The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, And as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed: 'Look, here is the Lamb of God!' The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them: 'What are you looking for?' They said to him: 'Rabbi, which means Teacher, where are you staying?' He said to them: 'Come and see.' They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon.

Reflect on the following questions and share what you wish in a small group.

- What particular phrase or words struck you?
- How are people introduced to Jesus in your parish community?
- What draws people to Jesus today?
Initiation of Adults: The Model for all Catechesis

Often in our catechesis it seems to make sense to begin with children, this could give the impression that what we do with children should set the tone for all our faith sharing endeavours. However, when we look at the documents of the Church there is a clear preference for what is called the 'baptismal catechumenate.'

The 'baptismal catechumenate' focuses more strongly on the initiation of adults into the Christian community, in other words on adults who are seeking baptism.

This focus on adults represents a recovery of the ancient tradition of the Church where baptism was viewed as an adult faith commitment. This is reflected in the following quotation from the GDC:

The model for all catechesis
is the formation of adults
for an explicit profession of baptismal faith
during the Easter Vigil
through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.
This should inspire all other forms of catechesis
In both their objectives and dynamism.

GDC 59

The Church is suggesting that we enable adults to grow in faith, so that they can confidently profess it, sets the pattern for all other forms of catechesis. Increasing numbers of adults are presenting themselves for baptism at the Easter Vigil, for them baptism is the high point of a journey. This journey involves the following elements:

- The adult passes through steps or stages on the way to baptism
- The stages are celebrated in liturgical rites
- Reflection on scripture and the tradition form habits of the heart for Christian life
- The adult gradually learns that disciples respond to the call to service

FIND OUT HOW THESE PRINCIPLES ARE BEING PRACTICED IN YOUR PARISH TODAY?
A Shared Community Responsibility

Catechesis for initiation has a strong community focus. The goal of catechesis is not only to enable the adult to embark on a lifelong journey of faith but also is about incorporating that adult into the Christian community which is already living, celebrating and bearing witness to faith in Jesus. However, when there are adults presenting themselves for baptism the relationship with and to the community is not totally one-sided, rather when the community walks with those seeking baptism there is a mutual enrichment as everyone in the parish is reminded of the importance of baptism, confirmation and Eucharist.

The crucial importance of initiation as a shared community responsibility is emphasized in the following key quotes from the RCIA:

The Initiation of Adults is the responsibility of the entire Christian community

RCIA 91

The Initiation of Adults is a sign of the Church’s care for people, which is shown through every form of education in the faith

RCIA 91

Catechesis after baptism does well to be inspired by the RCIA by:

- being comprehensive and integrated
- its gradual character expressed in definite stages
- connection with scripture and liturgical rites and symbols
- constant reference to the Christian community

RCIA 91

In what way could catechesis in your parish develop to include more elements of community responsibility?
What is the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults?

The RCIA is a formal ritual which the Church uses, throughout the world, for unbaptised adults which prepares them for becoming members of the Church. The first paragraph of the RCIA ritual makes it clear that the rite is celebrated when adults have experienced the following:

They have heard the mystery of Christ proclaimed
They have freely sought the living God
They have entered the way of faith and conversion

THE MYSTERY of CHRIST PROCLAIMED
In what way/s might an enquirer hear the mystery of Christ proclaimed? Generally it is through an experience of the liturgy or through the living example of a person of faith. In the parish RCIA sessions there should be ample opportunity to listen to the word of God and to enable participants to hear God’s word as addressed personally to them. Each Sunday of the year the Church proclaims a message from Christ, in the RCIA session the group should become aware of what the message from Christ is for this week.

FREELY SOUGHT THE LIVING GOD
A key principle in the RCIA is that God draws human beings towards himself. The RCIA emphasizes the importance of God’s grace; God is already working in the enquirer and giving that person the grace to respond to him. Members of the RCIA team nurture that grace of God in the person and help them to respond to that grace.

ENTERED the WAY of FAITH and CONVERSION
When we become aware of God’s grace in our lives we freely respond by following him, this is called discipleship. Conversion implies that we turn towards God and turn away from the things that stop us from following him. The RCIA team members need to be committed to this way of faith and conversion themselves.
The principles of the RCIA
When an RCIA team is thinking about how to accompany an enquirer then the following key principles should be kept in mind:

- Enquirers are initiated GRADUALLY
  RCIA 4

- Initiation takes place WITHIN the community
  RCIA 4

- The journey is SPIRITUAL
  RCIA 5

- The journey is marked by periods and STAGES
  RCIA 6 - 7

- The journey is PASCHAL, it’s about dying and rising
  RCIA 8

- All the baptized take part through their LOVE and PRAYER
  RCIA 379

- Formation is suited to the NEEDS of the participants
  RCIA 16

Take time to find out how your parish puts these seven principles into action when accompanying adults for baptism.

Note down what could be developed and strengthened.
Searching and Seeking: The Period of Enquiry

The initiation of adults is made up of a series of periods and stages. The periods are times of inquiry and growth; they can also be seen as preparing for the next stage on the journey. The stages mark the progress of the catechumen as they pass to the next level. The stages are the major, more intense moments of initiation and are marked by public liturgical rites.

1st PERIOD: Evangelisation and Precatechumenate

This is a time of no fixed duration or structure, an inquirer begins to ask questions about what it means to believe in Jesus, the challenge of living Gospel values, where God is in the world. This time is characterized by seeking and searching. Many of the great saints speak of this time in their spiritual journey where they sought God and sometimes could not find him, e.g. St. Augustine or St. Anselm.

It is important at this stage of Enquiry that the seeker is given the opportunity to ask their questions in an atmosphere of acceptance. RCIA team members can facilitate this searching and seeking by framing a process around the big questions, e.g., Who is God?, What is faith? How does God speak to us? How can we speak to God? This can be a time for exploring the general notion of a spiritual journey, images of God, the person of Jesus, prayer forms, Kingdom values and making a choice for the Kingdom.

The focus of catechesis should be reflective; the enquirers can be introduced to different ways of praying and be invited to practice them in between sessions. Those who want to ask big questions can be directed towards good reading material which they can reflect on in between sessions. It’s good to have a question box at sessions so that RCIA team leaders can make sure that no one’s questions are left unaddressed.

1st STAGE: Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens

When the enquirer feels ready then s/he will be encouraged to continue the journey as a catechumen, a catechumen is one who intends to follow the way of Christ.
Celebrating Rites: Rite of Acceptance

Each of the stages of growth is celebrated in a liturgical rite; this enables the whole community to be involved in the process of initiation. In this Rite of Acceptance the enquirer declares in front of the assembly that they are ready to walk their journey of faith with Christ. Some of the phrases in the prayer help us to understand the spiritual dynamic of conversion:

- Set your feet firmly on the path of the Gospel and acknowledge the living God
- Walk in the light of Christ and learn to trust in his wisdom
- Commit your life daily to his care
- Now is the time to hear his word
- Make the mind of Christ Jesus your own
- Pattern your life on the teaching of the Gospel
- Love the Lord your God and your neighbor

SIGNING with the CROSS

Once the catechumens have said a yes to their desire to do all of the above they are signed with the cross. The fuller rite not only signs the catechumen on the head but all the five senses are signed, this prayer emphasizes that conversion is about the whole person:

Receive the sign of the cross on your ears that you may hear the voice of the Lord
Receive the sign of the cross on your eyes that you may see the glory of God
Receive the sign of the cross on your lips that you may respond to the word of God
Receive the sign of the cross over your heart that Christ may dwell there by faith
Receive the sign of the cross on your shoulders that you may bear the gentle yoke of Christ.
I sign you with the sign of eternal life in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit

REFLECTION: As someone who is already Catholic reflect on how the sign of the cross has an impact on your life and the way you live? What effect might this Rite have on the catechumen and on the parish community?
Getting to Know the Tradition: The Catechumenate Period

2nd Period: Catechumenate

The catechumenate is about growing into knowledge of the community and its traditions. This is helped by catechesis which focuses more on the central tenets of faith which we find in the Creed. A skillful RCIA Team enables the catechumen to explore what it means to believe in God the Father, Son and Spirit and how we as a community live this out in daily life.

The kind of catechesis which is offered at this stage needs to honour the following key principles:

- It’s gradual and complete in its coverage,
- It’s accommodated to the liturgical year
- And it is supported by celebrations of the word. (RCIA 75:1)

This calls for a closer connection between the celebration of the Sunday liturgy and immersion into the way of life that the catechumen is entering. There is a natural link between what is experienced in the RCIA sessions and Sunday reflection on the word of God. If we honour the gradual character of initiation, the time of catechumenate is only a beginning of a life long journey of ongoing catechesis; this implies that a catechumen does not need to know everything that a lifelong Catholic knows.

During this time the catechumen is becoming more familiar with the Christian way of life, this happens naturally through interaction with the parish and also through the relationship with a good sponsor. The sponsor naturally witnesses to their faith by their prayer, conversation and example. This immersion into the life of the community is learned more by doing than by study.

When there are signs that the catechumen has grown in prayer, can bear witness to their faith, that they have set their hopes on Christ, are practicing love of neighbor and have begun to follow the inspiration of the Holy Spirit then they are called by the Bishop to the sacraments of initiation. (RCIA 75:2)
Celebrating Rites: Election or Enrolment of Names

This liturgy is celebrated on the First Sunday of Lent. The catechumens are accepted as ready for the sacraments of initiation at Easter. From this point onwards they are called the ‘Elect’. The bishop calls or elects the catechumen for the celebration of the sacraments of initiation, each one stands are they hear themselves called by name. The call of the bishop echoes the call of God which they have heard in their hearts. The Rite of Election, which is normally celebrated in the Cathedral of the Diocese, is also called the Rite of Enrollment as each name is written down in the Book of Elect. This Book has great significance because in the early Church when your name was recorded in the Book of the Elect you were also a prime candidate for martyrdom.

The bishop questions the community about the suitability of each catechumen and asks the following questions:

- Have they faithfully listened to God’s word proclaimed by the Church?
- Have they responded to that word and begun to walk in God’s presence?
- Have they joined the company of their Christian brothers and sisters and joined with them in prayer?

The intercessions for the elect emphasise the role of the community in supporting and accompanying them on the next stage of the journey. We pray that:

- their teachers may always convey the beauty of God’s word to those who search for it
- their godparents may be a living example of the Gospel
- their families may help them to follow the promptings of the Spirit
- our community may grow in charity and be constant in prayer
- these elect may find joy in daily prayer
- by praying to you often they may grow ever closer to you
- they may read your word and joyfully dwell on it in their hearts........

Take time to reflect on:
How you listen to God’s word
How you respond to God’s word in your life
How important the companionship of the community is for you
Extended Lenten Retreat: The Period of Illumination and Enlightenment

The season of Lent becomes a time of intense reflection for the whole community as the elect prepare to celebrate the sacraments of initiation. The community is encouraged to support the elect by more intense prayer, fasting and almsgiving. This models the Christian way of life for the elect, a life which is about growing relationship with God expressed in self-sacrifice and outreach to others. As this is an intense period of spiritual preparation it can be likened to an extended time of retreat, where the community and the elect pray for healing and strengthening.

SCRUTINIES
As we move towards Easter, there are special prayers used called scrutinies which enable the elect to search their hearts more deeply about their intention to be baptized. These scrutinies are celebrated on the 3rd, 4th and 5th Sundays of Lent, where Christ is recognized as the living water by the Samaritan woman, the light of the world by the blind man, and the resurrection and the life by Martha in the Lazarus story. As the elect are called to repentance, so too the community is reminded of its own need of healing and forgiveness.

PRESENTATIONS
These are formal liturgical celebrations where the community recognizes that the elect are ready to be entrusted with continuing to live the faith they will profess.
So sometime in the third week of Lent the community gathers to hand on the Creed which expresses the heart of the Church’s faith. In the liturgy the priest prays:

- My friends listen carefully to the words of that faith by which you will be justified.
  The words are few but the mysteries they contain are great. Receive them with a sincere heart and be faithful to them..............................

In the fifth week of Lent the community gathers to hand on the Our Father which represents the rich tradition of prayer in the Church. The elect are invited to listen to the gospel reading in which our Lord teaches his followers to pray, the homily acts as an opportunity to explore the many ways that Christian grow in prayer.
Celebrating Rites

The Easter Tridium is a season in itself, where the elect are drawn more fully into the life of the Church through hearing the call to service on Holy Thursday, the invitation to walk the way of the Cross on Good Friday which then leads to the celebration of new life in Christ through the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and Eucharist.

EASTER VIGIL

This is the high point of the liturgical year; the Church celebrates this by singing the Easter Proclamation which ends with the phrase 'This is the Night.' After the proclamation of the Easter Gospel and homily the elect celebrate the sacraments of baptism and confirmation, and their initiation is complete in the first reception of the Eucharist.

Explore the following elements of the Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation and note what strikes you:

- Prayer over the Water - this calls to mind the mystery of God’s love from the beginning of creation and how we are called to enter fully into the life of Christ by sharing in his death and resurrection.
- Renunciation of Sin and Profession of Faith - In the third week of Lent the community presented the catechumen with the Creed. Here the catechumen stands up in front of the Christian community and professes their faith for the first time. This expresses not only the faith of the Church but the living faith of the one to be baptized.
- Baptism - Through the pouring of water the catechumen is immersed into the very life of God who is Father, Son and Spirit. This immersion inserts the person into the life of the People of God where they become members of the Church.
- Anointing with Chrism - the newly baptized person is part of the royal priesthood of Christ.
- Clothing with a White Garment - this signifies the dignity of sons and daughters of God.
- Lighted Candle - The newly baptized are called to walk in the light of Christ and keep the flame of faith alive in their hearts.
- Confirmation - The faith of the newly baptized is confirmed by the laying on of hands and anointing, all baptized persons are called to service and ministry. Confirmation strengthens the baptized for service.
- Sharing in the Eucharist - With the entire community the newly baptized share in communion for the first time and are strengthened to continue their journey as believing, praying, and serving members of the body of Christ.
Deepening the Journey: Period of Mystagogy

The word Mystagogy is used to describe the time after baptism where those who are newly baptized deepen their understanding and experience of what they have celebrated. The newly baptized are now called 'neophytes'. The neophytes continued to be supported by regular catechesis which increases their contact with the community but also deepens their understanding of the Scriptures. During this time the community should create opportunities where the neophytes can feel included and grow in a sense of belonging.

This time can act as an opportunity for the neophyte to become aware of the many opportunities for service that are available in the parish. Time should be taken to reflect on the new experience of celebrating the sacraments. Focus should sift to the importance of gathering every Sunday with the assembly. Every Sunday Eucharist of the Easter Season can be viewed as a neophytes Mass. There should be opportunity for the community to meet and greet each new member. At this time the homily and the general intercessions should make particular reference to the presence of newcomers and the needs of neophytes.

At Pentecost there should be some kind of celebration which celebrates the integration of neophytes into the life of the community.

Celebrating Rites

It is interesting that there is no closure Rite, this emphasises the fact that neophytes are now called to live their Christian life in the community by gathering every Sunday for the Eucharist, celebrating the sacraments and by being a believing, praying, serving member of the Church.
Recall

When we examine the RCIA we become aware of key ideas that influence all catechesis

The RCIA is not a programme through which we put people through, it’s the beginning of a lifelong journey

Catechesis is more than instruction, it’s linked to spiritual growth, the community and the Sunday liturgy

The RCIA redefines what it means to be a Christian and what it means to be the Church

The RCIA requires a multitude of ministries, the community is key

All the baptized are responsible for the initiation of new members

The catechumenate provides skills for reflection in relation to God and daily life

The supporting role of the sponsor is crucial to the RCIA experience

The RCIA will raise questions for many lifelong Catholics

The purpose of the catechumenate is to support the conversion experience and confirm it

It is God who brings about conversion in the catechumen and in us

From the above note what strikes you?
JOURNALLING:

Take time to review what you have learned in this module about the RCIA and how it provides the model for all catechesis?

- What have you learned about the RCIA?

- How could the approach of the RCIA be integrated into other forms of catechesis?

- What skills would you need to develop now?

- How can you integrate your learning with what you are already doing now in catechesis?
Essential Resources:

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

Living Liturgy: Spirituality, Celebration and Catechesis for Sundays and Solemnities

The Way of Faith: A Field Guide for the RCIA Process

RCIA: Renewing the Church as an Initiating Assembly, Lawrence E. Mick, The Liturgical Press 1989

Living Baptism Daily: A Guide for the Baptised

Websites:

www.rcia.org.uk

http://teamrcia.com

http://rciablog.com

www.life4seekers.co.uk

www.celebratingfamily.org.uk

www.caseresources.org/
Module 3: Catechesis, Method and Content
REFLECTION:

*Listen to the reading twice, with silence for reflection after each reading...*  

As for you continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.  
All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.  
In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I solemnly urge you: proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favourable or unfavourable; convince, rebuke, encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching.

1) What stays with you from this passage?

2) Who and what do you remember in your experience of catechesis as a child and as an adult?

3) What different methods of catechesis have your experienced? What worked well for you?
Very often catechists are concerned about what kind of content they should be presenting in catechesis. You should keep in mind that the key source for any teaching content is the word of God. This is very clear in the passage from the GDC:

Catechesis will always draw its content from the living source of the word of God transmitted in Tradition and the Scriptures, for sacred Tradition and sacred Scripture make up a single deposit of the word of God, which is entrusted to the Church  GDC 94

It is important to reflect on what this means. Sacred Scripture includes all the books of the Old and New Testament where we are introduced to the various ways that human beings have come to knowledge of God. In the Old Testament we see how the community of Israel gradually became aware of how God communicates with human beings and how historically there were stages in this realization. In the New Testament we see how the Christian community gradually realized that Jesus is the Word of God made flesh among us and that his life and actions became the guiding principle of their lives. So a catechist needs to be aware of the structure and content of both the books of the Old Testament and New Testament, but more than this a catechists is aware that the word of God offers a message of hope for today and still alive and active, capable of changing and shaping hearts.

In catechesis, all catechists are enabling an encounter to take place between those who hear the word of God and God himself. Not only is it important that people hear the word but that they also understand the word of God and respond to it by living its message in their everyday lives. Pope John Paul II urged everyone in the Church to take up this book! ‘Let us receive it from the Lord who continually offers it to us through the Church! Let us devour it, so that it can become our very life! Let us savour it deeply: it will make demands of us, but it will give us joy because it is sweet as honey. Filled with hope, we will be able to share it with every man and woman whom we encounter on our way.’ (Ecclesia in Europa 65) Notice that John Paul speaks about the word of God as food and nourishment for our journey.

As a catechist how does God’s word feed and nourish you?
**SCRIPTURE & TRADITION**

As Catholics we often speak of Tradition, when we speak of this we are referring to what was handed on from generation to generation by the apostles. This includes ‘all those things which contribute towards the holiness of life and the increase of faith of the people of God, so that the Church, in her teaching, life and worship, perpetuates and hands on to all generations everything that she is, everything that she believes.’ (*Dei Verbum* 8)

The Tradition that we hand on is not something stagnant, but alive, dynamic and growing. It develops in the Church through contemplation and study, through deepening understanding of spiritual matters, and through the authoritative preaching of our bishops. For example, since Vatican II we have developed strong Catholic social teaching, in dealing with new situations the Church listens to God’s word with an attentive mind and heart so that there is a continuous learning and receiving of new insights.

**THE WORD of GOD (GDC 95)**

- is meditated upon and understood more deeply by means of the sense of faith of all the people of God
- shines forth in the life of the Church
- is deepened by theological study
- is celebrated in the sacred liturgy
- is manifest in religious and moral values which are seeds of the word sown in human society

**REFLECT ON:** What elements of the Tradition are essential for you as a catechist?
CATECHISM

Many Catholics are confused about the purpose of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. It is quite clear that it offers a synthesis of the Catholic Tradition. It is intended to act as a short reference work for all those who are responsible for catechesis in the Church. It is very helpful in the way it connects up the sources of the Tradition: Scripture, the Father’s of the Church, the Liturgy and Church Teaching. Catechists can use it as a basic theology text and for filling in gaps in knowledge. Any material from the catechism needs to be adapted for catechetical sessions; the catechism should never be presented to a group as a course book!

FOUR PILLARS
The catechism is structured around 4 Pillars of our Faith these are:

The Baptismal Profession of Faith

The Sacraments of Faith

The Life of Faith

The Prayer of the Believer

Adaptation and Methods
The Catechism does not set out any methods for sharing faith or passing on the Tradition. Experienced catechists adapt their sources to differences in culture, age and spiritual maturity, they are also aware of the social and ecclesial conditions among those to whom they are ministering.
JOURNEY of FAITH to FAITH

In the GDC 85 it clear that the work of catechesis is about enabling a growing relationship to develop in those who have initially encountered Christ, when we love a person we want to know the other all the more. This is why catechesis leads to a gradual grasping of the whole truth about Christ and his Church. Eventually over time the journey of faith deepens where deepening knowledge of faith enables us to give reasons for our hope in Christ. Catechists need to keep this gradual character of growth in faith in mind, we do not generally learn everything about even an aspect of our faith in one session, rather we gradually assimilate what we need over time.

THE ACTION of GOD

Experienced catechists honour the grace filled action of God in people’s lives. They know that it is God who has drawn others to himself and that God walks with each one on their journey of faith. The key skills that are required on the part of the catechist are about creating a climate where listening takes place, enabling people to respond freely and to actively participate in sharing their stories. As far as methods are concerned, an experienced catechist will use a variety of different approaches according to the age and intellectual development of the groups s/he is working with. However, it is important that every catechist has a basic tool kit that they can adapt. A key principle to keep in mind when planning sessions is ‘fidelity to God and fidelity to the person’ The GDC makes this clear:

Method is at the service of revelation and conversion and that therefore it is necessary to make use of it. The catechist knows that the content of catechesis cannot be indifferently subjected to any method. It must be transmitted in a way faithful to the message as well as to the particular circumstances of those to be catechized.

GDC 149
PLANNING

When you are devising a session of catechesis keep the following in mind

- Connecting – How is your session enabling participants to make connections between Scripture, Tradition, Life Experience and Celebration of Liturgy?
- Starting points – Where will you start from? Will you first focus on Life Experience which leads to Scriptural insight or will you begin with Scripture which leads to connecting to Life?
- SCRIPTURE: How will you explore the scriptures?
- LIFE EXPERIENCE: How will you enabled participants to relate what they encounter in scripture with their everyday lives?
- TRADITION: What wisdom is there in the Tradition which will enable participants to go deeper?
- LITURY: How will you enable participants to link all of the above to the celebration of Sunday Eucharist or the prayer of the Church?

In all sessions you should try to honour the 4 above elements

All of these elements in a session lead to a dynamic encounter with Christ who speaks to us in the Scriptures, who brings us wisdom from the Tradition, whose presence is celebrated in liturgy, who walks with us in our human experience.
METHODS

LBC – Lectionary Based Catechesis

Lectionary based Catechesis makes the fundamental connection between Liturgy and Catechesis: faith as believed, celebrated, lived and prayed. Through study and reflection together on the Sunday readings over time participants learn from each other the value of God’s word in their lives.

Who is it for?

Lectionary based Catechesis is ideal for use within the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). It identifies the scriptures read at Sunday Mass as the foundation of catechesis and introduces catechumens to the unfolding mystery of Christ as recalled in the liturgical year. Through getting to know Christ through the scriptures, catechumens also come to know what it is to live as Christ in the world through reflection and sharing with others.

‘Scripture provides the starting point, foundation and norm of catechetical teaching.’

The focus on the scriptures at Sunday Mass means that Lectionary based catechesis is suitable for all catechesis not only the RCIA. The richness of the scriptures offers flexibility to explore those matters that are relevant to the group. Catechesis involves the formation of the person in ‘intimacy with’ Christ as well as the handing on of doctrine. Such catechesis has also worked successfully with parents of children preparing for the Sacraments, equipping them with skills to pass on the faith to their children.

The method of Lectionary based catechesis can be used with:
- Adult faith sharing groups
- Those who prepare the Sunday liturgy
- Teams for Liturgy of the Word with Children
- Youth Groups
- Baptism Preparation
- 1st Communion Parents
- A homily preparation group

Those not able to join with such groups can be part of the process of reflection and learning if the readings (or references) together with questions are printed in the weekly newsletter or made available separately.

Lectio divina

This method for sharing scripture is inspired by the ancient monastic practice of lection divina, where monks would be taught four stages of reflection:

1) Reading the Passage out loud
2) Reflecting on its meaning for my life
3) Responding in prayer to the message that is given
4) Resting in contemplative silence
Powerpoint Presentations
Our culture today is a very visual one; it is a fact that 85% of what we know is learned by visual means. It is, therefore, important to use not only visual aids but also to make best use of technology. Powerpoint presentation can make some very complex ideas accessible; this can be done as part of a reflection or with a more inductive teaching style where there is lots of new information to take on board. (Samples of these are available from the archdiocesan website)

Group method
Most catechesis is done in a group setting so it is important that catechists are aware and make use of group method. Initially it is helpful to establish with the group how they will interact, otherwise a lot of time can be taken up by debate and argument when the tone of a catechesis session should be more about reflecting together and sharing. People always need to be reminded that what is shared in the group stays in the group; this builds trust and enables people to maintain a confidential environment.

Framing questions
It is important that any questions that are asked in the group setting are open, that they enable participants to open up. Open questions always begin with What, How, Why, When, Where, on the other hand closed questions illicit just a yes or no answer and close the conversation down. Here are examples of good questions:

- What stays with you?
- Why did these words strike you?
- How is the passage speaking to you now?
- When have you experienced something similar?
- Where do you feel drawn?
- What challenged you?
- How will you apply these insights in your daily life?
- What prayer do you feel is emerging for you?
- What action do you feel called to?

SMALL GROUPS & BIG GROUPS
In a small group setting people feel less threatened and are more willing to share, so it is important when there is a large group to use methods which allow for sharing in pairs or triads. Alternatively, you could use a Café style approach where the large group is divided into five’s pr sixes sitting at a table with a candle.
EVALUATION
This is important in every gathering as it enables you the catechist to find out what is working well and what might be adjusted for the group. Basic evaluation questions at the end of the meeting are:

- What worked well?
- What was difficult or worked less well?
- What do you need more of?
- What questions stay with you?
- What would you like to develop further?

In some catechesis sessions it is good to recall the previous week’s session, you can use questions such as:

- What stays with you from last week?
- What has come to mind about the last session since we met?
- What have you carried in your mind and heart from the last session?
- How did the insights from last week stay with you?

The Importance of the Group
The GDC is very clear that catechesis in groups is very fruitful as it leads people towards an experience of community, this is emphasised in the following passage:

Groups play an important function in the development processes of people. This is true of catechesis for children, young people and adults. The catechist who participates in such groups and who evaluates and notes their dynamics recognizes and plays the primary role of participating in the name of the Church as an active witness to the Gospel, capable of sharing with others the fruits of his or her mature faith as well as stimulating intelligently the common search for faith. Apart from a teaching aspect, the Christian group is called to be an experience of community and a form of participation in Church life.

GDC 159

REFLECTION: What strengths do you bring to groups?
What do you group skills do you need to develop further?
FAITH SHARING

In every catechesis session faith sharing is taking place; catechists need to be aware of what enables this to happen, so here are some guidelines:

1) Remember that Faith Sharing is voluntary. People need to be invited to share; verbal participation is encouraged but not demanded.

2) Faith Sharing is not interrupted. A good catechist enables the group to listen before commenting or speaking. Side conversations are discouraged, generally only one person speaks at a time.

3) Faith sharing is not contradicted. As sharing is based on the person’s own experience conclusions or critiques of what is shared are not appropriate.

4) Sharing is always done in ‘I’ language. Good catechists encourage participants to begin with: I think, I fell, I like... rather than Mary said, they think, they feel, people say!

5) Faith sharing is confidential. What is shared in the group stays in the group. A good catechist might encourage insights to be shared with a wider group but always asks permission the permission of the sharer.

Many people do not know the difference between debate and dialogue, the tone of faith sharing is about dialogue. The table below clarifies the difference.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEBATE</th>
<th>DIALOGUE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assumes that there is a right answer and that only some people possess it</td>
<td>Assumes that many people have pieces of the truth and that together we can come to truth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is competitive: Participants attempt to prove the other side wrong</td>
<td>Is collaborative: Participants work together toward common understanding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is about winning</td>
<td>Is about seeking common ground</td>
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<tr>
<td>Listens to find flaws</td>
<td>Listens to understand, find meanings and agreement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Defends assumptions as truth</td>
<td>Reveals assumptions for re-evaluation and learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critiques others positions</td>
<td>Re-examines all positions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Defends one’s own view against others</td>
<td>Admits others’ thinking can improve one’s own</td>
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<tr>
<td>Searches for flaws and weaknesses in others</td>
<td>Searches for strength and value in others’ position</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seeks a conclusion that ratifies one’s own position</td>
<td>Seeks new options, keeps ideas flexible and open</td>
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</table>

What skills of faith sharing would you like to practice?
JOURNALING;

Take time to review what you have learned in this module about Content & Method in Catechesis?

❖ What have you learned about content?

❖ What methods in catechesis would you now like to develop now?
Take time to plan one session of catechesis using the template provided below is an example.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAIN FOCUS of SESSION</th>
<th>Images of God</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scripture to be used</td>
<td>Mark 12: 29 - 37</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tradition: What’s the wisdom</td>
<td>We believe in on God (creed)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Life Experience: How is it linked?</td>
<td>How do we experience God in everyday life?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liturgy Link: How does it connect with the Churches liturgy?</td>
<td>Celebrate our belief in God on Trinity Sunday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer Link: What resource will be used?</td>
<td>Prayer of St. Nicholas of Flue, or Teresa of Avila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music Link: CD? Hymn? Other?</td>
<td>Let nothing trouble (CD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection Questions: What are they?</td>
<td>What name do you use for God? What is Jesus saying about God in the gospel? How does this connect with our celebration of the liturgy? What do the great saints say?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handouts/ who will copy these</td>
<td>Copy of texts, reflection questions &amp; prayer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prayer of Nicholas of Flue:

*My Lord and my God, take from me everything that distances me from you*
*My Lord and my God, give me everything that brings me closer to you*
*My Lord and my God, detach me from myself to give my all to you*

Teresa of Avila’s Prayer:

Let nothing trouble you
Let nothing frighten you
Everything passes
God never changes
Patience obtains all
Whoever ahs God wants for nothing
God alone is enough
CATECHETICAL SESSION PLANNING SHEET

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RESOURCES:

- The Sunday Missal
- The Gift of Scripture: Bishops’ Conference of England & Wales, Scotland, CTS 2005
- The Gift of Scripture Unwrapped: An Introduction to the Bishop’s Document on the Bible, Rejoice Publications
- The Catechism of the Catholic Church 1994
- What Very Catechist Should Know, Joseph D. White, Our Sunday Visitor 2003
- How to be a Catechist, Susan Sayers, Kevin Mayhew Publishers 2003
Module 4: Catechesis, Prayer and Liturgy
Reflection

Pray this portion of psalm 66 together:

O God be gracious and bless us
And let your face shed its light upon us
So will your ways be known upon earth
And all nations learn your saving help

Let the peoples praise you O God
Let all the peoples praise you

Let the nations be glad and exult
For you rule the world with justice
With fairness you rule the peoples,
You guide the nations on earth

Let the peoples praise you O God
Let all the peoples praise you

The earth has yielded its fruit
For God, our God, has blessed us
May God still give us his blessing
Till the ends of the earth revere him

Let the peoples praise you O God
Let all the peoples praise you

1) What words or phrases stay with you?
2) Take time to remember a liturgy that struck you deeply. What made it special, what symbols and actions spoke to you deeply?
3) When you celebrate any liturgy what do you hope for? What do you bring to worship and what you receive from it?
Catechesis and Liturgy

The Second Vatican Council called for a more profound understanding of the place of liturgy in the life of the Church and the life of each one of us. Therefore liturgical catechesis is key in any work we do as catechists. The GDC (71) states that this liturgical catechesis involves a range of activities which includes the following:

1) Take time to think about how you have learned about the celebration of the sacraments........
2) How have you grown in your understanding of the signs and gestures we use in our liturgies?
3) What does the phrase ‘active participation’ mean to you?
The presence of Christ and encounter

We believe that when we gather for liturgy we encounter a person, this person is the Risen Christ who gathers us and calls us to relationship with him. In our sacramental celebrations we often refer to the presence of Christ. There are a variety of ways in which we encounter this person as we celebrate liturgy:

- We encounter Christ in the people gathered
- We encounter Christ in the presiding minister
- We encounter Christ in his word
- We encounter Christ in the sacraments

The GDC makes this very clear when it states that ‘Christ is always present in his Church, especially in liturgical celebrations’ GDC 85. Good catechesis leads to encounter with Christ, it enables us to make connections between what is being celebrated and who is being celebrated. It helps us to realize more fully that Christ is present to us now.

Take time to reflect about how you have experienced the presence of Christ in the liturgy in the word, in sacrament, in the presiding minister and in the people gathered..............................
Symbols, gestures,

Good liturgical catechesis explains what liturgy is and offers an experience of the different kinds of celebrations. Knowing why we sit, stand or bow at particular times in a liturgical celebration helps everyone to make clearer connections. Here are some common examples of gestures that need to be explained:

- Standing for the singing of the alleluia
- Sitting attentively to listen to the word of God
- Standing to pray the Our Father
- Genuflecting or bowing before the altar
- Making the sign of the cross on the forehead, lips and heart at the proclamation of the Gospel
- Processing with reverence to receive communion or a blessing
- Gazing at the host when it is held up by the priest

What do all of the above prayer gestures mean to you?
How would you explain them to a group of enquirers or children preparing for first Holy Communion?

Symbol and gestures are closely connected but are not the same thing. Our churches are full of symbolic imagery which speak to us of the presence of God. However, often these symbols need to be initially explained in order to impact on us fully. This is clear, for example, when we bring adults for the first time into church. They often ask basic questions such as what is that water thing at the back of the Church! This can be an ideal opportunity for basic liturgical catechesis about baptism and its meaning and the reason why we have fonts at the back of our churches.

When symbols are explained well they enable everyone to make connections between themselves and the presence of God. However, when they are over explained they may disempower us from connecting into the mystery that is God’s presence and action among us.

Give examples of symbols or symbolic actions that you feel need to be sensitively explained to newcomers to enable them to enter more fully into the action of the liturgy......
Prayer Forms

When we celebrate liturgy we also engage in a variety of prayer forms, here are some of them:

- **THANKING** – this focuses on thanking God for all he has given and for the wonder of creation, we use this prayer form most frequently in the Eucharistic prayer
- **CONFESSING** – we turn again to God when we have strayed and ask for his mercy, we use this prayer form at the beginning of every mass in the sacrament of reconciliation
- **PETITIONING** – we ask God for something, this is used in the Prayer of the Faithful and in a variety of sacramental celebrations
- **ADORATION** – we use this prayer form particularly after the reception of holy communion where we give our love to God in return for love
- **CONTEMPLATING** – we are simply still in the presence of God and know that he is with us, this is a form of prayer that we use in liturgy when we are caught up in the wonder of the celebration

**EXAMPLES** of these prayer forms are taken from scripture:

- **Holy, holy, holy Lord**
  
  *Isaiah 6:3*

- **I will praise the Lord as long as I live**
  
  *Psalm 145:2*

- **My Lord and my God**
  
  *John 20:28*

- **Have mercy on me O God**
  
  *Psalm 50*

- **Lord, teach us to pray**
  
  *Luke 11:1*

*The most helpful way to teach these prayer forms is by experiencing them in a prayer exercise.*

*How would you teach any of the above prayer forms to a group? Explore Part Four of the Catechism of the Catholic Church: Chapter Three which examines vocal prayer, meditation and contemplative prayer.*
Communion with Christ
The following quotation from the GDC 85 makes it clear that the key to any catechesis on prayer is about growing in relationship with Christ:

Communion with Christ leads to prayer with Christ.

The sentiments with which Jesus prayed must be ours:
  - adoration,
  - praise,
  - thanksgiving,
  - trust,
  - supplication,
  - and awe.

All of these are reflected and summed up in the very prayer which Jesus taught us, the Lord’s Prayer.

Catechesis must teach this prayer with passion along with other forms of prayer.

It must promote a climate of prayer in the lives of those to be catechized this climate is especially needed when the Gospel’s demands are toughest, or when one feels weak, or when the mysterious action of God is discovered in one’s life.

Reflect on how you as a catechists can promote a climate of prayer in any sessions you lead..............................................
Our Father

The great Church Father Tertullian spoke of this prayer as a summary of the whole Gospel. This is further developed by St. Augustine when he says that in the Our Father we not only ask for all the things we rightly desire, but also in the sequence that they should be desired. (CCC 2761)

The Our Father is so central to our prayer tradition that it has been called the Christian Prayer. In this prayer our particular desires are given a more universal focus. This prayer is not a mechanical formula given to us by Jesus, but is a model pattern for our prayer. When the Church gathers together we always use this prayer; when we celebrate sacraments and when we pray the prayer of the Church or what is also called the Liturgy of the Hours.

This is why catechumens are taught this prayer in preparing for baptism and confirmation. When the Our Father is presented to them in Lent it signifies the handing on of the rich tradition of prayer which is part and parcel of the Christian way of life.

When we pray the Our Father during the celebration of the Eucharist it sums up all the intercessory prayer and petitions we have prayed in the Eucharistic prayer. The Our Father also emphasises that we gather in the hope that Jesus will return, we celebrate the fact that our salvation is accomplished and we wait until he comes in glory.

When we are teaching this prayer we need to be aware that it is more than a prayer that we might occasionally say, but rather through meditating on it we can learn about how to relate to God. This might be emphasised in the way we explore the seven petitions:

- Hallowed be thy name
- Thy kingdom come
- Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven
- Give us this day our daily bread
- And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us
- And lead us not into temptation
- But deliver us from evil

*How might you offer a catechesis on the Our Father in the following catechetical moments?*

*Preparation for baptism,*

*First Communion Preparation,*

*Christian Initiation of an Adult.*
Sacraments and Rites

In liturgical catechesis the best way to learn about the sacraments is by exploring the various liturgical rites by which they are celebrated. Each of the rites for the sacraments focuses on particular signs and symbols which helps us to understand their effect in our lives. Explore the following and how you might connect them up with celebrating the Rites.

SACRAMENTS of INTITATION

- **Baptism**
  - Baptized in water
  - Anointed
  - Dressed in a white garment
  - Receive the light of Christ

- **Confirmation**
  - Laying on of hands
  - Anointed with chrism

- **Eucharist**
  - Receive the body and blood of Christ

SACRAMENTS OF HEALING

- **Reconciliation**
  - Welcome & Blessing
  - Listen to Scripture
  - Confession
  - Penance & absolution
  - Thanksgiving & Blessing

- **Anointing**
  - Welcome & Blessing
  - Listen to Scripture
  - Anointing with oil and prayer for healing
  - Thanksgiving & Blessing

SACRAMENTS of SERVICE

- **Marriage**
  - Consent to lifelong fidelity
  - Exchange of rings
  - Exchange of vows

- **Holy Order**
  - Laying on of hands
  - Anointing
  - Promise of lifelong obedience

When preparing a session on sacraments always use at the prayers in the rites.............
Living Liturgy and the Cycle of Prayer

Good liturgical catechesis enables the participants to enter into the spirit of liturgical seasons and to begin to taste the flavor of each season. When preparing sessions you should set up focal points for prayer and reflection which enable everyone to see instantly what portion of the liturgical year is being celebrated.

In Advent there should be a sense of waiting and watching, this is not a penitential season but more like an anticipatory season. Good liturgical catechesis should enable this sense to grow particularly by exploring the key Sunday readings and prayers, the use of candles and the colour purple. Whereas the season of Christmastide has another flavor, this is about light and brightness and the coming of the Light of the World, very often the focus of this season is misdirected towards children and we forget to live the season fully with all the days of Christmastide until the Baptism of the Lord.

Living with the Ordinary Time cycle also has a different flavor and any liturgical catechesis would introduce the group to at least the Gospel writer for the particular year. Lent is sometimes a season of missed opportunity, particularly when it is not strongly linked to journeying with those who are to be baptized at Easter. The motif of journeying is important during Lent as it enables everyone to either embark afresh on their own spiritual journey or to become more conscious of those who may be on the journey for the first time. Each of the Sundays of Lent moves us to a new place on our journey with God. When there are adults for baptism only Year A readings are used, these link to specific celebrations called scrutinies which are used in the RCIA.

Easter also has its own flavor and colour. The fifty days give us time to reflect more deeply on the experience of resurrection and the difference it makes in our lives. Finally there is the great feast of Pentecost where the whole Church prays for a fresh outpouring of the Spirit, good liturgical catechesis ensures that participants are led into the period of preparation that leads to Pentecost and also enables reflection about the place of the Spirit in our lives.

When the liturgical seasons and the cycle of prayer are followed in catechesis, participants can more easily make connections between the content of the Lectionary, the structure of the liturgical year and the Sunday homily. This engenders a sense of celebration and connection with the living God.

How do you personally celebrate the different liturgical seasons of the year? What helps you to celebrate them?
**Good Liturgical Catechesis leads to Worshiping Well**

The GDC 30 spells out the challenges of good liturgical catechesis, this testifies to:
- Strong and integrated links with the liturgy
- Paying more attention to liturgical symbols and rites
- Good use of the sources of the liturgy
- Catechetical programs which connect with the liturgical year
- Giving a central place to liturgical celebrations in all catechesis

All of the above leads to worshipping well. Worshipping well arises when four elements interact, these are:

- **The sense of God’s presence**
  When we celebrate liturgy we are led to realize that God’s saving presence is with us

- **The sense of being part of a worshipping assembly**
  We realize that we are taking part in common prayer and corporate worship

- **The sense that we are linked to a living tradition**
  We have inherited a wealth of symbols, texts, rituals and music

- **The sense that we are being drawn towards the kingdom of God**
  There is an integral link between worship, mission, liturgy and justice

**As you examine the above elements which particular aspect would you want to develop further in your catechesis?**
A Full Liturgical Life

All of the above elements lead to living out a full liturgical life where participants are led to a growing understanding that ‘Christ is always present in his Church, especially in liturgical celebrations. This is the kind of celebration that St. Augustine describes:

‘Now we urge you to praise God.
That is what we are telling each other when we say Alleluia.
You said to your neighbor, Praise the Lord, and your neighbor says the same to you,
we are all urging one another to praise the Lord,
and all thereby doing what each of us urges the other to do.
But see that your praise comes from your whole being;
in other words, see that you praise God not with your lips and voices alone,
but with your minds, your lives and all your actions.

We are praising God now,
assembled as we are here in church,
but when we go our various ways again it seems as if we cease to praise God.
But provided we do not cease to live a good life,
we shall always be praising God.’

How can you enable this kind of full, conscious and active participation in liturgy to take place in your parish?
How might you need to change the way you currently approach catechesis?
JOURNALLING

1) What have you learned about the relationship between catechesis and liturgy in this module?

2) What do you now need to develop in your own practice of liturgical catechesis?

3) Choose one group from below and take time to devise a session which enables that group to understand the meaning of the Rite:
   a) A group of Parents who have requested Infant Baptism
   b) A group of children preparing for the Sacrament of Reconciliation
   c) A group of Adults preparing for the Sacraments of Initiation
   d) A group of Eucharistic ministers exploring the Eucharistic prayer
   e) A group of parish visitors exploring the Sacrament of the Sick
4) Take time to evaluate the whole year of catechists training using the template below:

CONTENT:
In what way/s did you find the content of the course helpful or unhelpful, accessible or unaccessible?

METHOD:
In what way was the method of teaching at Saturday sessions helpful or unhelpful?

RESOURCES:
How might you use the recommended resources?

What resources have you purchased for yourself or the parish?
REFLECTION MATERIAL:
How easy or difficult did you find it to engage in the reflection questions throughout the year?

USEFULNESS for your PARISH MINISTRY:
How might you use what you have learned in your catechesis in the parish?

SCALE of ASSESSMENT
Please circle below how you would scale the course from 1 to 5.

1 - Not accessible, difficult to understand, unhelpful

2 - Some material accessible but generally not practical or useful

3 - Material helpful, useful and practical for parish catechesis

4 - Very helpful, learned new skills, very practical for parish

5 - Excellent, I gained many new skills, can easily apply then practically, I would now like more
RESOURCES:

The Liturgy Documents: A Parish Resource, Liturgical Training Publications
Celebrating the Mass, The Bishops Conference of England and Wales
The General Instruction on the Roman Missal
With Minds and Hearts
How to Understand the Liturgy, Jean Lebon, SCM Press 1987
Enjoying Mass: A Resource for Teachers and Catechists, Joan Brown, Kevin Mayhew Publishers
The Mass from Start to Finish, Gerald O’Mahony, Kevin Mayhew Publishers
The Lord Be With You: Introducing the Mass to Children, McCrimmons Publisher
The Catechism of the Catholic Church, Part Two Section One: The Sacramental Economy
The Catechism of the Catholic Church, Part Four Section One: Prayer in the Christian Life
The Catechism of the Catholic Church, Part Four Section Two: The Lord’s Prayer: Our Father
Daily Prayer: Morning, Evening & Night, David Adam published by Kevin Mayhew

www.liturgyoffice.org.uk
www.fdlc.org/Liturgy_Catechesis.htm